

Hymn Study: Great is Thy Faithfulness

“Great Is Thy Faithfulness” is a hymn that celebrates the unchanging nature of God and His constant care for His people. Rather than emerging from a dramatic moment of rescue or revival, it reflects a steady, lifelong awareness that God remains faithful through every season—both joyful and difficult.

Written in 1923 by Thomas O. Chisholm, the hymn opens with a declaration of God’s constancy, proclaiming that there is “no shadow of turning” with Him. In a world where circumstances continually shift, God alone remains dependable and true.

Chisholm’s life adds profound depth to the hymn’s message. Born in a humble log cabin in Kentucky in 1866, he had little formal education and spent his early years working as a teacher and newspaper editor. After becoming a Christian, he entered the ministry, but his time as a minister was cut short due to fragile health. Much of his life was marked by physical weakness and financial uncertainty rather than outward success.

Yet it was precisely this ordinary, often difficult life that gave rise to the hymn’s message. Chisholm did not write of dramatic miracles or sudden deliverance. Instead, he reflected on God’s daily faithfulness—the quiet provision that sustained him year after year. He later described his life as one filled with challenges, yet always accompanied by the unwavering presence and care of God.

As the song unfolds, it turns to the natural world as a witness to that faithfulness. The rhythms of creation—summer and winter, seedtime and harvest—serve as daily reminders that God sustains and orders all things. These familiar cycles quietly testify to His ongoing care, offering reassurance that His promises endure just as surely as the rising and setting of the sun.

The final verse brings the message into personal experience. God’s faithfulness is not merely seen in nature or theology but is felt in the life of the believer through forgiveness, peace, strength for each day, and hope for the future. The well-loved refrain captures this beautifully:

*Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed, Thy hand hath provided—
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

Each new day becomes evidence of God's continued provision and grace.

The hymn draws its inspiration directly from Lamentations 3:22–23: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed... They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." These words were originally written during a time of deep sorrow and devastation in Israel's history, which makes their message even more powerful. God's faithfulness is not dependent on ease or prosperity; it shines most clearly in seasons of hardship.

When William M. Runyan received Chisholm's poem, he immediately recognized its beauty and set it to music that matched its tone—steady, warm, and reassuring rather than dramatic. Though the hymn did not become widely known at first, it gradually gained recognition through Bible conferences and institutions such as Moody Bible Institute. It later reached a broader audience through evangelistic campaigns, particularly those associated with Billy Graham.

Over time, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" has become one of the most beloved hymns across Christian traditions. Its enduring appeal lies in its simplicity and truth. It speaks not only to moments of great joy, but to the quiet, everyday faith that sustains a life. It reminds us that God's faithfulness is not reserved for extraordinary events, but is revealed again and again in the ordinary mercies of each new day.

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

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WORDS: Thomas O. Chisholm, 1923
MUSIC: William M. Runyan, 1923

FAITHFULNESS
11.10.11.10 with Refrain

1. Great is Thy faith-ful-ness, O God my Fa-ther, there is no shad-ow of
2. Sum - mer and win-ter, and spring-time and har-vest, sun, moon and stars in their
3. Par - don for sin and a peace that en - dur-eth, Thy own dear pres-ence to

turn - ing with Thee; Thou chang - est not, Thy com - pas-sions they fail not;
cours - es a - bove join with all na - ture in man - i - fold wit-ness
cheer and to guide; strength for to - day and bright hope for to - mor-row,

Refrain
as Thou hast been Thou for - ev - er will be.
to Thy great faith - ful - ness, mer - cy, and love. Great is Thy faith-ful-ness!
bless - ings all mine, with ten thou-sand be - side!

Great is Thy faith-ful-ness! Morn-ing by morn-ing new mer-cies I see; all I have

need-ed Thy hand hath pro - vid-ed— great is Thy faith-ful-ness, Lord, un-to me.